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Choosing your niche: The social ecology of the International Baccalaureate Diploma in Australia.

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Abstract:

The International Baccalaureate's branding and reputation targets academic high achievers aiming for university entrance. This is an empirical examination of the growing popularity of this transnational secondary credential amongst local populations in Australia, focusing on its uptake across the community, and the discourses underpinning its spread and popularity. This paper reports on online surveys of 179 parents and 231 students in schools offering the IB as an alternative to Australian state curricula. It sets out to understand the social ecology of who chooses the IB and who it chooses. Statistically significant differences between IB and non-IB choosers were found in terms of family income, parent education, student aspirations, transnational lifestyles, and neoconservative, neoliberal and cosmopolitan beliefs. The analysis demonstrates how the reproduction of advantage is accomplished through choice behaviours in stratified educational markets.

Keywords: International Baccalaureate, selectivity, neoliberalism, neoconservatism, cosmopolitanism, transnationalism.

This paper explores a relatively new educational phenomenon: the presence of a transnational secondary credential within local curricular markets that historically have been monopolised by a state-level certification. Over its 40 year history, the International Baccalaureate Diploma has been typically associated with international schools for expatriate communities in the US, Canada, UK, Asia and Europe (Bunnell, 2008). However, this ambit has recently expanded to offering a branded alternative in private and government schools with local catchments, enabled by regulatory regimes encouraging competition with state schooling and its official curriculum. In 2011, the IB was offered in a total of 11 state-funded schools, and 51 independent schools in Australia. This ratio is higher in the UK, (139 of the 219 IB

schools being state funded), Canada (120 of the 142 IB schools), and the US (662 of the 751 IB schools) (www.ibo.org, accessed 4 July 2011) and warrants closer examination.

The survey research reported is from a sociological study of the uptake and implementation of the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB) in Australia. The project included online surveys of parents and students in schools that offered both the IB and the government curriculum. The instruments gathered data on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, social attitudes and choice decisions to allow a comparison between those choosing the IB and a matched cohort of non-IB choosers within the same schools. This paper reports on the social ecology of the IB's uptake in Australia, by asking who chooses the IB in Australian schools, and what beliefs and lifestyles are associated with its flourishing uptake.

The paper begins with an outline of the IB program and then considers its relational effects, policy contexts and the discourses that have cultivated a taste for the IB in local populations. Next the methodological design is outlined. The results compare the demographic and attitudinal backgrounds of families choosing the IB with those of families choosing the generic curriculum for the final years of secondary schooling. The concluding discussion considers how the social ecology of the IB in Australia sustains a stratified curricular market that protects advantage.

The IB by design

The IB is the prototypical transnational school curriculum with its origins in the needs of mobile transnational elites (Fox, 1985). The norm in OECD countries has been for secondary curricula to remain under the jurisdiction of the state, province or nation both to facilitate pathways to matriculation and post-secondary participation, and to serve the distinctive knowledge, civics and values of nations. In the last decade, the

Bologna Accord, comparative university rankings systems, and a series of multilateral agreements between countries have begun the process of setting transnational 'standards' in areas of university credentials and vocational education. Through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and other comparative assessment systems, a defacto move towards transnational schooling standards has emerged (Luke, 2011). Yet to date there have been few such formal agreements around secondary schooling. The IB is thus a rare senior school certificate that operates beyond the jurisdiction of national systems.

The IB is currently offered in English, Spanish or French and is founded nominally on the broad principles of a Western liberal arts education. Allowing for some local adaptation, its literary, scientific, philosophic texts and discourses draw on UK, US and European templates. The global spread of Western secondary curricula has important historical precedents. In part, the spread of European curriculum and examination systems was a central component of colonisation since the 18th century (Carnoy, 1974) with many postcolonial systems retaining residual curriculum traditions, albeit under different knowledge/power relationships (Spring, 2004). Further, the spread and uptake of US educational structures and systems in the postwar period in countries like Korea, Taiwan, China, and the South Pacific is well documented (Nozaki, Openshaw & Luke, 2005). However, despite the emergence of 'powerful transnational curriculum discourses' (Luke, 2008, pp. 146-147) around human capital requisites for globalised and information economies, an approach to secondary curriculum that claims to be 'beyond the nation' is still unique.

The pedagogical approach espoused by the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) draws explicitly on Anglo-European liberal arts principles, stressing student-centred instruction, dialogue, independent learning, an ethic of service, and philosophic reflection on the world, aesthetics and knowledge. At the

same time, its substantive content provides a more traditional focus on canonical scientific, literary and cultural texts and knowledge. The IB requires six subjects across humanities, sciences, arts, first language (including world literature in translation), mathematics, and a second language in the final two years of secondary education, three of these subjects at an advanced level. It also requires: an extended essay on a disciplinary topic chosen by the student; participation in a 'Creativity, Action, Service' program; and the innovative subject, 'Theory of Knowledge' with its schema of disciplinary 'ways of knowing'. The Diploma is assessed by external examination, with some moderated internal assessment. Over four decades, the IB has established a strong global brand (Cambridge, 2002) and a reputation for academic rigour that precedes it and informs its consumption (Doherty, 2009). It is marketed as a credential that trumps the local certificate and is recognised by high status universities across the globe.

The curriculum's tenet of 'international-mindedness' reflects liberal traditions from Kant to Levinas of cosmopolitanism as 'moral universalism'. This approach is premised upon universal human rights and morality that stretches across national and cultural borders, with the individual as responsible agent (Appiah, 2006). It melds liberal values, rights and responsibilities with a commitment to a new internationalism which values cultural exchange, intercultural communication, multilingualism, active global citizenship and mutual understanding. These new cosmopolitan values also underpin liberal approaches to multiculturalism (e.g. Nieto, 2000). In related work, Doherty and Li (2011) have explored in more detail how the IB's design for producing the intercultural citizen was diluted through teachers' recontextualisation of dated or contradictory interpretations of what it means. In addition, Doherty, Li and Shield (2009) report how students' motives in choosing the IB interpret the international dimension of the IB more instrumentally as enabling advantageous

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transnational lifestyles. There is thus an inherent, unarticulated tension between cosmopolitanism as an end in itself, and as a means to other, specifically economic and occupational, ends. By design, the IB thus offers an intriguing case of blending two distinctive elements of educationally acquired cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986): (1) retrospective canonical knowledge and habits of mind, and (2) emergent forms of 'intercultural capital' (Goldstein, 2007) that will facilitate prospective participation in transnational economies (Resnick, 2008).

The IB's broader impact

Though enrolling only a small proportion of Australian students, the IB has played an important symbolic role in public debates driving the current effort towards a national curriculum. In 2007, the Liberal Federal Minister of Education invoked the IB as an exemplar for a proposed national certificate that would supersede the state certificates. The current Labor government has since drafted a national curriculum, sparking concern over whether it will be mandated for continued public subsidy of independent schools, thus potentially displacing the IB. In response, lobby groups have championed the IB and other alternative curricula cultivated under looser regulation and competitive marketisation. The current government has also promoted a vision for an 'Australian Baccalaureate ... a new voluntary qualification that provides senior students with access to a credential of international standing' (see <http://www.alp.org.au/agenda/education---training/australian-baccalaureate/>).

In their review of the limited research on international education, Dolby and Rahman (2008) note that the community of scholars working in this area are typically 'affiliated with the International Schools Association, International Baccalaureate Organization, and the Council of International Schools Research' (p. 692). Bunnell (2008) similarly reports on 'the surprising paucity of literature' (p.411) regarding the

IB. Research to date has reported on curricular outcomes (Hayden & Wong 1997), its reputational status (Cambridge, 2002), and narrative accounts of IB implementation (Mathews & Hill, 2005). There are other articles that associate the IB with education for the gifted (for example, Hertberg, Callahan & Kyburg, 2006). The celebratory nature of much of this literature fails to account for the IB's relational impact on local contexts, and its wider effects on school communities, though Cambridge (2010) considers the effects of the market on the IB program over time. More critical treatments of the IB are emerging. Drake (2004) warns of 'cultural dissonances' as the IBO looks to advise non-European national systems. Other critiques dispute the efficacy of the IB's internationalist claims (Bagnall, 2005; Van Oord, 2007). There has been little rigorous empirical research on the IB. Published work tends to be practice- or advocacy-based, anecdotal, small scale survey with convenience samples, or essayist critique. What empirical research is available is limited by sampling only IB graduates or students without any comparative foil, and failing to account for the effect of selectivity when reporting its outcomes.

Tarc's historical analysis (2009) outlines how the IB has provided an answer to various problems in different times and places, producing 'contradictions between the provision and take-up of IB and IBO's professed values' (p. 3). To empirically account for its growing popularity in Australia, the next section frames its consumption as the 'answer' to problems constructed in the historical coincidence and contradictions of three major educational discourses:

- (1) neo-liberal policies encouraging choice and competition;
- (2) neo-conservative advocacy of canonical, liberal humanist curriculum;
- (3) liberal/cosmopolitan normative hopes for the emerging global order.

The IB in the current policy environment

Australia, like other OECD countries, has pursued neoliberal policies promoting market choice in education (Campbell, Proctor & Sherington, 2009). In contrast to former equity priorities, neo-liberalism employs a logic of market choice, such that historically stable pathways through conventional, shared curriculum are now disrupted by the presence of the IB and other branded curricula such as Steiner, Montessori as choices in school systems. While the IBO is registered as a not-for-profit organisation, the IB credential accrues exchange value for the individual in terms of institutional access, mobility and employability. This extra value (and potential profit) bestows a form of 'distinction' (Bourdieu, 1984) on its discerning clients, who can exchange this capital for mobility in the 'socially recognized hierarchy' (p.1) of university study, corporate and government employment, and cosmopolitan elites (Cheah & Robbins, 1996). As a collateral effect, its marketing in Australia relegates the states' credentials to the status of being generic, unbranded commodities (Klein, 2000). In short, the presence of the IB can debase the local currency.

Labaree's (1997) analysis of educational reforms in the US refers to the neoliberal agenda as the 'social mobility' perspective given the way it promotes education as a private investment in the individual's competitive prospects, as opposed to the public good it constitutes in his 'social democracy' and the 'social efficiency' perspectives. Larabee argues that where the social mobility perspective dominates, the following effects are generated:

- increasingly hierarchical stratification of educational credentials;
- increasing stratification of educational institutions by reputation; and,
- increasing stratification of offerings within educational institutions to distinguish the individual from others.

The same factors are at work in Australia. In 2007, the State of Queensland opened selective academies offering only the IB ‘for the best and the brightest’ (see <http://www.qldacademies.eq.edu.au/history/index.html>). Such branding enhances institutional reputations, and the IB’s presence as a parallel offering can serve as a cream-skimming device through explicit/implicit selectivity. Such patterns of selective cohort formation are already well established in the Australian independent schools sector – the IB creates another mode of stratification within schools themselves.

Here we have two principal foci: the social class selectivity of IB cohorts and stratification of student cohorts by curriculum; and the discourses influencing and rationalising that selectivity. Though Labaree associates this perspective with ‘social mobility’ of the individual, such policy can in effect facilitate the social reproduction of advantage for advantaged groups. The middle and upper classes are understood to aggressively pursue ‘strategies of closure’ (Ball, 2003) seeking added educational value in niche markets which limit access to their profits. In this way, ‘the “academic capital” enjoyed by IB Diploma holders is the more potent for this scarcity value’ (Bagnall, 2005, p. 114).

For Apple (2001), the current flavour of neoliberalism exists in contradictory yet symbiotic relationship with neo-conservatism, which favours traditional values in school curriculum. Buras (1996) summarises the core assumptions of this ‘neo-conservative vision’ across the work of its strongest US advocate, E.D. Hirsch. These include valuing traditional didactic practice over child-centred or process-oriented pedagogy; a search for coherence in unproblematic universal knowledge and a common cultural induction as formative nationalism. In Australia this agenda has been promoted by the national newspaper, *The Australian*, which champions a

combination of neoconservative discourses around ‘crises’ in schooling and neoliberal solutions (McNight, 2001).

The IB manages to satisfy aspects of both the neo-liberal and the neo-conservative agendas. It served as the exemplar of monopoly-busting choice by neoliberal advocates (Doherty, 2009). However its ‘student-centred’ pedagogy and philosophic enquiry may not appeal to neo-conservative advocates. In fact, the US conservative action group, *Edwatch* put the IB on notice as a dangerous form of internationalism unacceptable to ‘patriotic Americans’ (<http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/08/ed-watch/2-18-ibo.htm>; see also Bunnell, 2009). Yet its highly prescriptive courses of study in traditional disciplines, and high stakes external examinations resonate with neo-conservative approaches to curriculum, in opposition to the instrumentalism, interdisciplinarity and progressive assessment practices found in Australian curricula.

In regard to the discourse of cosmopolitanism, the IB was designed to enable a mobile lifestyle for transnationals without detriment to their children’s education, and to nurture the global citizen. Importantly, we distinguished between these two goals in the survey’s conceptualisation, understanding the former goal (movement across multiple national spaces) as transnationalism and the latter (the moral or ethical stance of openness to Other cultural frames) through the concept of cosmopolitanism (see Doherty & Li, 2011). Where there is often slippage in the assumption that a transnational lifestyle will produce cosmopolitan attitudes, Roudometof (2005) argues that their articulation is less certain and more problematic. While transnational lifestyles, with or without cosmopolitan motives, may have explained the first wave of Australian schools offering the IB Diploma, we hypothesise that both factors will be less evident in uptake of the IB by nationals in their local schools which we expect will be more strongly motivated by neoliberal and/or neoconservative rationales.

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This section has drawn out some of the current ironies around the IB's local uptake. The survey instruments for parents and students sought to gauge their degree of transnationalism, and their adherence to neoliberal, neoconservative educational and cosmopolitanism ideologies, to ask why some parents, students, and schools, but not all, choose the IB. Given the discussion above, we would expect that there are combinations of lifestyle and attitudes that would predispose people to make the IB choice. On the basis of published research and the foregoing theoretical framing, we hypothesised that parental/family IB choice would be associated with:

- (1) Higher social class (indexed by income and educational level);
- (2) A transnational lifestyle (evident in household mobility, multiple languages, dual citizenship, immigration history)
- (3) Neo-conservative educational values (attitudes favouring liberal arts and canonical knowledge over instrumentalism; disciplinary versus interdisciplinary study; traditional over progressive pedagogies; external exams over school-based assessment; prescription of curriculum and pedagogy)
- (4) Neo-liberalism (supporting choice and competition in schooling market; prudentialism in choices; market orientation to education policy)
- (5) Cosmopolitanism (attitudes valuing global over local allegiances, tolerance of difference, intercultural goals, valuing multilingualism)

For students, we would also expect that as a result of its strong branding as an elite credential, IB choice would also be associated with high academic achievement and university aspirations. In a community where such predisposing attitudinal and

lifestyle factors are concentrated, we would expect the IB to flourish through parent demand and student choice/strategy. Conversely, where the IB is speculatively offered as a school strategy, it would serve to attract and cultivate such parents and students.

Design of the Survey Instrument

The scope of the survey research was conceptualised in four domains – the IB choice, the IB experience, IB outcomes and the IB philosophy. A pilot study was conducted at a school offering both IB and local curricula. Focus group interviews were conducted with teachers, parents and students to isolate possible themes, concerns and attitudes associated with IB uptake. The results were used to guide the development of survey items for each population. The designs used both qualitative and quantitative items. The quantitative components captured demographic information, and Likert scale ranks on attitudinal items, including sets of items plumbing neoliberalism, neoconservatism, and cosmopolitanism. The generation of the items to map these domains was based on theoretical grounds and relevant literature. The items were then peer reviewed as part of the pilot to plumb face and construct validity. Future work will build and test single factor congeneric measurement models to further establish the reliability and validity of the item sets in mapping the domains. The qualitative items offered opportunities to elaborate on the quantitative items. Versions of the survey instruments were trialled with members of the target populations to ensure readability, clarity in rubrics, adequate range in responses, and online functionality. The necessary ethical permissions were sought from relevant government departments, and principals were asked for permission to conduct the research in their school communities. Invitations to participate were distributed through 33 IB schools across Australia that agreed to participate. Responses were collected late 2008, and early 2009.

Results

The surveys achieved 179 responses from parents (144 choosing the IB, 35 not choosing the IB), and 231 student responses (160 choosing the IB, 71 not choosing it), across 26 schools in the country. The sample of schools constituted approximately half the schools then implementing the IB. Despite repeated efforts, we were unable to recruit similar sample sizes for IB and non-IB cohorts. Note that non-choosers were enrolled in state curricula in these schools that *also* offered the IB. Hence, the effects of school location and social class composition of catchment areas are not likely to vary between the two samples. Our aim is: (1) to describe the social ecology of this curriculum; (2) to analyse which discourse elements of its marketing and design motivated student and parent choice. Statistical analysis was carried out using Minitab (2007). Cohen's d was calculated as a measure of effect size with values around 0.2 indicating a small effect, 0.5 a medium effect and 0.8 a large effect.

Who is choosing the IB?

The survey was only carried out in schools that offered students the choice between IB and state curricula for their senior schooling. This means respondents are already filtered from the broader population by school locality and choice. Nevertheless, a statistically significant difference (approaching a medium effect size) was found between the proportion of IB and non-IB choosers with combined household income greater than \$200,001 ($t(168)=2.230$, $p<0.05$, 1-sided) (see Table 1). Here a one-sided test was chosen to reflect the a priori assumption that a higher proportion of IB choosers would have an income of \$201,000 or more. The proportion of households with incomes greater than \$200,001 was sixteen percentage points higher ($M=0.162$, $SD=0.073$) for IB choosers.

<<INSERT TABLE 1>>

Secondly IB-choosing parents were more likely to have postgraduate educational qualifications (see Table 2).

<<INSERT TABLE 2>>

A statistically significant difference (approaching a medium effect size) was found between the proportion of IB and non-IB choosers with a parent whose highest education was a postgraduate degree ($t(177)=2.220, p<0.05$, 1-sided). A one-sided test was chosen to reflect the a priori assumption of higher education in parents of IB choosers. The proportion of households with a parent with a postgraduate degree were nineteen percentage points higher ($M=0.193, SD=0.087$) for IB choosers.

As a corollary the difference between proportions with the lowest level of parental education (Year 12, its equivalent, or less) was also found to be statistically significant ($t(177)=1.29, p<0.05$, 1-sided). The proportion of households with a parent whose highest education was Year 12 or less was seven percentage points higher ($M=0.073, SD=0.043$) for non-IB choosers. This represents a small effect size. Given that parental income and educational level are two classic indicators of social class, we surmise that it is more likely that parents whose children choose the IB are more likely to be of mid/upper socioeconomic background and that social class will mediate IB choice.

Student aspirations

Students were asked to indicate their post-school aspirations (Table 3).

<<INSERT TABLE 3>>

It was assumed a priori that a greater proportion of IB choosers than non-IB choosers would exhibit an ambition to attend international universities, and a lower proportion would exhibit an ambition to attend TAFE or not pursue further studies. This was tested with statistically significant results ($t(228)=3.80, p<0.05$), ($t(228)=-4.06, p<0.05$) and ($t(228)=-2.83, p<0.05$) respectively. The proportion of IB choosers whose aspiration was an overseas university was 27 percentage points higher ($M=0.271, SD=0.071$). Their proportion aspiring to TAFE was almost thirteen percentage points lower ($M=-0.128, SD=0.032$), and their proportion reporting no aspiration for further study was six percentage points lower ($M=-0.064, SD=0.023$). These differences represented a medium or approaching a medium effect size.

Transnational lifestyle

As an indicator of transnationalism, parents were asked to describe their own, their partner's and their child's citizenship status (see Table 4). There were more varied modes of citizenship among the IB choosing respondents, with only 36.8% of parents both Australian citizens and Australian born, and 62.5% of the students being Australian citizens and Australian born, as compared to 54.3% and 74.3% of non-IB choosers, respectively.

<<INSERT TABLE 4>>

The difference in proportions of families with both parents being Australian citizens and Australian born is not statistically significant ($t(177)=-1.87, p>0.05$). However, given the original design of the IB for transnational families, an a priori argument could be made that this proportion would be lower for IB-choosing families, in which case the one-sided p-value indicates a significant difference ($t(177)=-1.87$,

$p < 0.05$, 1-sided). Families of IB choosers were more likely to have at least one parent with permanent residency status with citizenship elsewhere, dual citizenship, or residence overseas ($t(177) = 3.00$, $p < 0.05$). A similar difference in attributes was seen in the students ($t(177) = 2.22$, $p < 0.05$). These differences represented a medium or approaching a medium effect size.

Other survey indicators of transnational lifestyles included episodes of the household living abroad, and language diversity. Of the IB choosing families, 42.8% reported having lived overseas for a period of 3 months or more, compared to 24.2% of the non-IB families, a difference which is statistically significant ($p = 0.046$). Similarly, 11.5% of the IB choosing families spoke a language other than English most often in their household, compared to none of the non-IB families, a difference which is also statistically significant ($p = 0.041$). These three indicators would suggest that the IB continues to attract students living more transnational lifestyles, as befits its original mission.

To understand the attitudinal resonances between IB choice and the broader ideologies described above, the survey listed a series of strong opinion statements to which respondents were asked to rank their degree of agreement or disagreement on a Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Neo conservative attitudes

Parents were asked to respond to a series of 28 opinion statements including eight which probed neo-conservative attitudes and their expression in curricular design. A comparison of means was carried out between IB and non-IB choosers with respect to parental responses to neoconservative items. Of the eight items, three have statistically significantly different means at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level (see Table 5).

<<INSERT TABLE 5>>

The statement, *I think that students in senior schooling should be made to study a broad set of subjects, not just those they choose*, has statistically significantly different means ($t(177)=3.924, p<0.05$), with IB choosers responding on average more than one point higher ($M=1.124, SD=0.286$), a large effect size. In total, 58.3% of IB choosers agreed (rank 5-7) compared to 22.9% of the non-IB group ($t(177)=3.77, p<0.05$). Of interest in this statement is not the just the breadth of subjects (which is a requirement of the IB) but the forceful prescription, ‘*be made to*’ which contrasts with the more liberal ethic of student interest/choice.

Similarly, responses to the statement *I think schools should teach the best of Western cultural heritage and traditions*, displayed a statistically significant difference with a medium effect size in cohort means ($t(177)=2.320, p<0.05$), with IB choosers responding on average more than half a point higher ($M=0.607, SD=0.261$). The statement was ranked 5-7 by 49.3% of IB choosers, compared to 28.6% of non-IB choosers ($t(177)=2.21, p<0.05$). Responses to the statement, *I think school assessment is best done through external exams*, also had statistically significantly different means ($t(177)=2.226, p<0.05$), with IB choosers reporting on average almost 0.7 points higher ($M=0.695, SD=0.307$), approaching a medium effect size. In total, 51.2% of IB choosers, compared to 40.0% of non-IB choosers, agreed with this statement, although this difference was not statistically significant ($t(177)=1.50, p>0.05$).

Neoliberal attitudes

Amongst the attitudinal statements, there were others that plumbed neoliberal attitudes that value choice and support competitive behaviours in educational markets.

A comparison of means between IB and non-IB choosers was carried out on the neoliberalism items (see Table 6). Of the seven items, three had statistically significant differences at the $\alpha=0.05$ level, all approaching medium effect size.

<<INSERT TABLE 6>>

The statement, *I think the quality of a school should be judged by the proportion of graduating students who enter university*, has statistically significantly different means ($t(177)=3.105, p<0.05$), with IB choosers reporting on average almost a point higher ($M=0.992, SD=0.329$) than non-IB choosers. Responses to the statement, *I think independent schools offer better education than public schools*, had statistically significantly different means ($t(177)=2.616, p<0.05$), with IB choosers reporting on average almost a point higher ($M=0.927, SD=0.354$) than non-IB choosers. Of the IB choosers, 65.2% compared to 37.1% of non-IB choosers, agreed with this statement, a difference which is highly significant ($t(177)=3.04, p<0.05$). Likewise, responses to the statement, *I am prepared to pay more for a better quality education*, also had a statistically significant difference between cohort means ($t(177)=2.312, p<0.05$), with IB choosers reporting on average 0.7 units higher ($M=0.703, SD=0.304$) than non-IB choosers. The statement was scored between 5 and 7 by 82.6% of IB choosers, compared to 62.9% of non-IB choosers ($t(177)=2.57, p<0.05$).

Cosmopolitan attitudes

The final set in the attitudinal items probed the cosmopolitan dispositions of identifying with the global community over the local, and supporting goals for a more

cosmopolitan society through the school curriculum. The IB's requirement of second language learning is such a curricular feature which overtly prioritises 'international-mindedness', markedly so in Anglophone settings such as Australia where second language study is rapidly shrinking. A comparison of means was carried out between IB and non-IB choosers with respect to parents' responses to cosmopolitan items (see Table 7). Of the thirteen items, five had statistically significantly different means at the $\alpha=0.05$ level, all above or approaching medium effect size.

<<INSERT TABLE 7>>

A statistically significant difference was observed between mean responses for IB and non-IB choosers to the statement: *I think it is crucial that people speak more than one language* ($t(177)=3.943, p<0.05$). On average, IB Choosers responded more than a point higher ($M=1.117, SD=0.299$). The difference between the cohorts' mean responses for the statement, *I think learning a second language should be compulsory*, was also statistically significant ($t(177)=3.229, p<0.05$), with IB choosers' responses typically more than a point higher ($M=1.142, SD=0.354$). A third statement, *I think second language learning at school should be about communicating across cultures and nations in today's world*, also revealed a statistically significant difference, ($t(177)=2.648, p<0.05$) with IB choosers responding more than half a point ($M=0.551, SD=0.208$) higher. Similarly, statistically significant differences between means were also observed in the responses to the statements, *I think it is essential that school credentials are recognised internationally* ($t(177)=3.064, p<0.05$), and *I think schooling should build international cooperation* ($t(177)=2.759, p<0.05$). IB choosers' averages were respectively just under a point ($M=0.904, SD=0.295$) and almost 0.7 ($M=0.684, SD=0.248$) higher.

How do IB choosers relate to various IB attributes?

The IB Diploma has a number of distinguishing features which come as a non-negotiable package. The survey asked those who chose the IB to indicate how each feature impacted on their decision in terms of whether it was considered **a risk**. The survey listed a series of ‘risks’ reported by participants in the pilot study, and asked parents and students to rank each one according to what degree it was considered a risk in their IB choice (1 being ‘not considered a risk’, to 7, ‘considered a major risk’). On this scale any ranking from 2 to 7 would indicate some degree of risk was factored into the IB choice. Table 8 summarises the IB students’ responses ($n = 163$) listing the items from the most risky to the least.

<<INSERT TABLE 8>>

This table suggests that the riskiest aspects were the work load and the degree of difficulty, followed by exam assessment. In their responses, IB-choosing parents showed similar patterns for many of these ‘risk’ items, but with more moderate scores. The only item considered more risky in general by parents was the high stakes exam assessment. Student and parent reports on their risk assessment of different features of the IB choice demonstrate the exercise of prudentialism in the choice of curriculum – strategically weighing risks against the possible benefits. These responses suggest the IB is undertaken knowingly as a challenge and is not for the faint-hearted. It also suggests that these aspects of the IB reputation can serve to select out other students who might balk at its reputation for workload and challenge. The default ‘homebrand’ curriculum is not afforded this capacity to select in and out.

Discussion

The introduction to this paper highlighted the growing uptake of the IB in local curricular markets beyond its original ambit in transnational communities. The curriculum's design was understood to offer two types of valuable cultural capital: canonical disciplinary knowledge, and intercultural capital to promote life chances in a globalised economy. The IB's branding has created an elite reputation that precedes its uptake and filters who it selects in and who it selects out, though this effect is rarely explored in the limited research literature that underpins claims of its superior outcomes. Despite the lack of such scrutiny, the IB has had broad impacts in Australian's policy landscape where it has been invoked as a solution to a variety of perceived problems, sponsored in particular by choice advocates. We argued that the IB's unique branding, design and status have resonated with discourses around neoliberalism, neoconservatism and cosmopolitanism in the current ecological conditions of educational policy and economic change, despite ironic dissonances between these frames.

The analysis firstly sought to describe the social ecology of this curriculum in terms of who is choosing it. As hypothesised, the analysis demonstrated a statistically significant overrepresentation of IB choosers in families in the highest income bracket, and with parental postgraduate education. These are economic and cultural capitals that advantageously bolster their children's educational chances, evident in the marked pattern of university aspiration amongst IB choosing students' and their greater capacity to imagine an international destination for such study. The analysis also showed that IB choosers as a group display more transnational lifestyles, indicated by varied citizenships, linguistic mix, or household mobility. This finding invites two comments – firstly, while these demographic characteristics describe the community for whom the IB was initially designed, they also describe elements of the

contemporary Australian community with its migration and mobilities. Are such families seeking out the IB to better accommodate their world views because local curricula fail to acknowledge their stake in transnationality? Secondly, could the IB cohorts' overrepresentation of transnationality in itself explain the 'international-mindedness' claimed as an outcome of the IB (see Hayden & Wong, 1997)? It should also be noted that those with some element of transnationality did not account for all IB choosers, of whom 62.5% were Australian born citizens and 36.8% had parents who were Australian born citizens. This finding confirms the trend of IB uptake by locals, and raises the question of whether vicarious sources of 'international-mindedness' IB programs have been able to rely on will diminish.

The analysis secondly sought to distinguish which ideological discourses were associated with student and parent choices. As hypothesised, IB choosers on average scored higher than the non-IB cohort on items plumbing neoconservative attitudes, with three of these items showing statistically significant difference in cohort means. The IB's traditional disciplines, external examinations, and prescription of an ensemble of subjects could thus be considered to resonate with the neoconservative reaction against more progressive curricular and pedagogic designs. Further, IB choosers on average showed higher affinity with neoliberal attitudes with three items showing statistically significant cohort differences. These trends suggest that IB choosers are more ready and willing to exercise choice in educational markets, and will be responsive to branding and claims of differential quality.

The third set of items plumbed cosmopolitanism as an ethical disposition to cultural diversity and global forms of citizenship. IB choosers' responses were on average higher for most of these items, significantly so for five. This suggests a predisposition to a more cosmopolitan outlook in IB choosers and their investment in the IB program to cultivate it. Again, this finding means that claims about the IB's

capacity to produce such values need to consider the predispositions selected into the program. If the brand manages to attract the like-minded, then the program will inevitably deliver. If however, the design was employed more broadly across a less selective population, there are fewer guarantees that it can cultivate such dispositions pedagogically.

The final analysis of risk factors in the IB choice branding also served to demonstrate what messages the IB brand projects to potential candidates. We argue its 'risky' reputation for a demanding workload and academic challenge will serve to filter candidates - steering some students away while welcoming the more able and motivated – a privilege the generic curriculum cannot claim. This capacity to select in or out is only possible through the IB's hosting within a stratified market, where those selected out have other options.

Understanding the perennial issue of relative disadvantage in education requires a conceptualisation of relative advantage and how it is increasingly accomplished through choice behaviours and 'strategies of closure' (Ball, 2003) in niche settings. From this analysis, it is our view that the demographic, dispositional and academic selectivity of the IB catchment achieved through means of branding and reputation must be accounted for before making any claim regarding its outcomes or design per se. In Australia, the uptake of the IB as a curricular choice appears more likely in socio-economically advantaged groups – a desirable demographic for any school in an environment of published competitive league tables. It will appeal to the strategic middle class parent, the aspirational student, and the tactical school in search of such clients. The surveys were only carried out in schools that offered the IB. Given the selectivity achieved through school choice itself, we suggest that the demographic contrasts between IB choosers and others would be more strongly marked if IB choosers were to be contrasted with the broader population beyond such

schools. By understanding how this branded curriculum is distributed across the community, what motives and discourses sponsor its uptake, and how these choices reflect larger debates, we are in a better position to evaluate its possible contributions to educational thought and design across fields, and its impacts on specific national, regional and state cohorts.

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Table 1. Relationship between household income and IB choice

Table 2. Relationship between parental education and IB choice

Table 3. Relationship between student post-school aspiration and IB choice

Table 4. Relationship between transnational lifestyle and IB choice

Table 5. Relationship between parent's responses to neoconservative items and IB choice

Table 6. Relationship between parent's responses to neoliberalism items and IB choice

Table 7. Relationship between parent's responses to cosmopolitanism items and IB choice

Table 8. IB students' considerations of potential risks in the IB program, n=163

Table 1. Relationship between household income and IB choice

	IB chooser (n=136)	Non-IB chooser (n=34)	95% Confidence Interval for the difference in proportions	Cohen's <i>d</i> Effect size
Household income (before tax) per annum	% of Responses	% of Responses		
Less than \$101,000	24.3	35.3	(-0.286,0.066)	-0.241
\$101,000 – 120,999	10.3	14.7	(-0.174,0.085)	-0.133
\$121,000 – 140,999	11.8	11.8	(-0.121,0.121)	0
\$141,000 – 160,999	8.1	8.8	(-0.113,0.098)	-0.025
\$161,000 – 180,999	5.9	5.9	(-0.089,0.089)	0
\$181,000 – 200,999	8.8	8.8	(-0.107,0.107)	0
\$201,000 or more	30.9	14.7	(0.020,0.304) [#]	0.392

* $p < 0.05$, 2-sided, [#] $p < 0.05$, 1-sided

Table 2. Relationship between parental education and IB choice

	IB chooser (n=144)	Non-IB chooser (n=35)	95% Confidence Interval for the difference in proportions	Cohen's <i>d</i> effect size
Highest education level achieved by either parent	% of Responses	% of Responses		
Year 12 or less	4.2	11.4	(-0.183,0.038) [#]	-0.277
Trade Certificate	2.1	2.9	(-0.068,0.052)	-0.051
Diploma or equivalent	5.6	8.6	(-0.130,0.070)	-0.117
Bachelor degree	29.9	42.9	(-0.310,0.050)	-0.271
Postgraduate degree	47.9	28.6	(0.023,0.364) [#]	0.400
Other	10.4	5.7	(-0.045,0.139)	0.175

* $p < 0.05$, 2-sided, [#] $p < 0.05$, 1-sided

Table 3. Relationship between student post-school aspiration and IB choice

	IB chooser (n=160)	Non-IB chooser (n=71)	95% Confidence Interval for the difference in proportions	Cohen's <i>d</i> Effect size
<i>Student Post-School Aspirations</i>	% of Responses	% of Responses		
Not interested in further study	0.6	7.0	(-0.125,-0.003)**	-0.380
TAFE or equivalent	1.3	14.1	(-0.221,-0.046)***	-0.541
Local University	71.9	70.4	(-0.112,0.142)	0.201
Interstate University	48.1	54.9	(-0.207,0.071)	-0.136
International University	53.8	26.8	(0.141,0.400)***	0.559

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, 2-sided

Table 4. Relationship between transnational lifestyle and IB choice

<i>Family Member</i>	<i>Transnational lifestyle indicator</i>	IB chooser (<i>n</i> =144)		Non-IB chooser (<i>n</i> =35)	95% Confidence Interval for the difference in proportions	Cohen's <i>d</i> effect size
		%	%			
Parent	Both parents are Australian citizens AND Born in Australia	36.8%	(53)	54.3%	(-0.358,0.008) [#]	-0.353
	At least ONE parent has one of the following: dual citizenship, permanent residency with citizenship elsewhere, or resides overseas.	43.8%	(63)	20.0%	(0.082,0.393)**	0.519
Child	Child is Australian citizen AND Born in Australia	62.5%	(90)	74.3%	(-0.283,0.047)	-0.255
	Child has one of the following: dual citizenship, permanent residency with citizenship elsewhere, or resides overseas.	37.5%	(54)	20.0%	(0.021,0.329)*	0.391

^a not all families had a second parent/caregiver, however the percentage reported shows the number of responses as a percentage of family cases in the category completing the survey.

****p*<0.001, ***p*<0.01, **p*<0.05, 2-sided, [#]*p*<0.05, 1-sided

Table 5. Relationship between parent's responses to neoconservative items and IB choice

<i>Item</i>	IB chooser (<i>n</i> =144) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Non-IB chooser (<i>n</i> =35) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	95% Confidence Interval for the difference in means	Cohen's <i>d</i> Effect size
I think that students in senior schooling should be made to study a broad set of subjects, not just those they choose	4.67(1.537)	3.54(1.442)	(0.559,1.689)***	0.758
I think schools should teach the best of Western cultural heritage and traditions	4.52(1.458)	3.91(1.040)	(0.091,1.123)*	0.482
I think school assessment is best done through external exams	4.67(1.600)	3.97(1.740)	(0.090,1.301)*	0.419

****p*<0.001, ***p*<0.01, **p*<0.05, 2-sided

Table 6. Relationship between parent's responses to neoliberalism items and IB choice

<i>Item</i>	IB chooser (<i>n</i> =144) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Non-IB chooser (<i>n</i> =35) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	95% Confidence Interval for the difference in means	Cohen's <i>d</i> Effect size
I think the quality of a school should be judged by the proportion of graduating students who enter university	3.76(1.738)	2.77(1.784)	(0.343,1.642)**	0.562
I think independent schools offer better education than public schools	4.81(1.813)	3.89(2.139)	(0.228,1.626)**	0.464
I am prepared to pay more for a better quality education	5.65(1.606)	4.94(1.644)	(0.103,1.303)*	0.437

****p*<0.001, ***p*<0.01, **p*<0.05, 2-sided

Table 7. Relationship between parent's responses to cosmopolitanism items and IB choice

<i>Item</i>	IB chooser (<i>n</i> =144) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Non-IB chooser (<i>n</i> =35) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	95% Confidence Interval for the difference in means	Cohen's <i>d</i> Effect size
I think it is crucial that people speak more than one language	5.06 (1.614)	3.89 (1.471)	(0.586,1.767)***	0.758
I think learning a second language should be compulsory	4.77 (1.895)	3.63 (1.800)	(0.444,1.840)***	0.617
I think it is essential that school credentials are recognised internationally	5.36 (1.576)	4.46 (1.521)	(0.322,1.486)**	0.581
I think schooling should build international cooperation	5.80 (1.277)	5.11 (1.471)	(0.195,1.174)**	0.501
I think second language learning at school should be about communicating across cultures and nations in today's world	5.98 (1.074)	5.43 (1.220)	(0.140,0.961)**	0.479

****p*<0.001, ***p*<0.01, **p*<0.05, 2-sided

Table 8. IB students' considerations of potential risks in the IB program, n=163

1= not considered a risk 7= considered a major risk	Low risk 1-3	Medium risk 4	High risk 5-7	<i>M (SD)</i>
Managing the anticipated work load	21.5%	13.5%	65.0%	4.81 (1.691)
Degree of difficulty	32.5%	11.0%	56.4%	4.33 (4.869)
Exams as the major form of assessment	38.7%	10.4%	50.9%	4.11 (1.889)
Whether teachers could deliver this curriculum	42.9%	14.1%	42.9%	3.89 (2.088)
Having to continue in a subject I'm not that good at	42.9%	10.4%	46.6%	3.82 (2.085)
Possible academic failure	46.0%	10.4%	43.6%	3.78 (2.194)
Limited choice of elective subjects	50.9%	12.9%	36.2%	3.55 (1.856)
Having to wait for the final assessment to know how I went	49.1%	17.8%	33.1%	3.55 (1.973)
Possible disruption of my friendship networks	52.2%	12.9%	35.0%	3.50 (2.010)
Your own level of familiarity with the IB curriculum	62.0%	17.8%	20.3%	2.96 (1.839)
It being a new program for the school	76.1%	8.6%	15.3%	2.28 (1.851)
Going outside the normal tertiary entrance system	79.1%	8.0%	12.9%	2.16 (1.571)